Proposed Future Process for Improved Identification and Communication of Regional Priority Needs and Documentation of ORD Contribution to the Regions

Many Regional science and technology needs are presently addressed through existing ORD programs, e.g., RARE, RM, R2P2, R-EMAP, or through the technical support offered at ORD's Technical Support Centers. In addition, many Regional staff routinely and informally communicate with their network ORD contacts to seek technical advice or gather information on past, present and future ORD research. The process outlined in this paper for identifying regional science needs is not meant to replace these existing programs or informal avenues of communication. Rather, this process is meant to be utilized where existing programs and contacts are either insufficient or inappropriate. We hope that using a more formal process will provide a documented listing of ORD support to the Regions. However, ORD is interested in having a fuller understanding of its contribution to the Regions, we expect that when ORD support is solicited informally, the Regions will also document these activities.

Objectives

Provide a process by which the Regions can communicate science needs for which existing mechanisms are not in place to consider the need, and establish a means of documenting ORD's contribution to regional offices. By routinely collecting information on Regional needs, as well as information on how ORD has addressed these needs, we can develop a dataset that can be used to:

- o Identify examples of ORD support to the Regions
- o Improve the documentation of ORD contributions to the Region
- o Identify future opportunities for ORD support
- o Identify cross-regional needs
- o Identify opportunities for collaboration across EPA offices
- o Inform National Program Directors and National Program Offices to provide them with a better understanding of Regional science-related priorities.

The purpose of this document is not to create a separate process for planning research to support regional needs. Regional research needs that are identified through this process that are not being addressed through the existing research program will be provided to the National Program Directors and considered through ORD's research planning process.

Process Outline for Regularly Collecting Regional Priorities

Each Region will develop an internal process to identify their priority science needs for which existing programs are not in place to consider. These existing programs include RARE , RM, R-EMAP, R2P2, ORD's Technical Support Centers, and the Region's own network of ORD contacts. These needs will generally fall into one, or perhaps more, of the following categories (organized approximately by the resources required).

- Consultative Advice
- Workgroup/Committee/Seminar Participation
- Document Review
- Technical Outreach
- Research

Note: Attachment A contains examples for some of these activities.

Each identified priority will be accompanied by a short write-up (see Attachment B for a suggested format) that would provide general background information as well as specify the Region's expectations from ORD.

Priorities that involve consultative advice, workgroup/committee/seminar participation, or document review

The means by which each Regional priority will be "addressed" by ORD will generally vary according to the category it falls into, i.e., the resources required. The Regional needs that are less resource intensive and involve short-turnaround times, such as consultative advice, workgroup/seminar participation, or document review can be identified on a monthly basis and should be submitted to the Office of Science Policy (OSP). These needs will be considered through a Program-Support like process where OSP Program Support staff, in consultation with their ORD Lab and Center Coordinators, identify the appropriate ORD staff to review a document, participate in a workgroup, or informally provide advice/expertise. As is done with the Program Offices, this support will be focused on the highest priority needs considering available resources. OSP will track/tabulate ORD's support to the Regions for these needs.

Priorities that involve technical outreach or research
For Regional needs that are more resource-intensive, such as technical outreach (see Attachment A for examples) or research, ORD would collect requests from the Regions on a regular (e.g., annual) basis. These more resource intensive needs will be submitted from each Region's DRA to ensure senior management concurrence.

ORD's Lead Region Coordinator, working with the Office of Science Policy's (OSP) Regional Science Liaison Coordinator, will be responsible for collecting and organizing these technical outreach and research needs. These Coordinator(s) will work with the RSLs to consolidate the needs and identify those needs that are of the highest priority, taking into account the work that is taking place to address needs identified in previous years.

For research needs, NPDs will identify the ongoing or recently completed research that relates to the need. If ORD is not conducting research in the subject area, the research need will be considered as part of ORD's research planning process.

For all other needs, NPDs will consider them on a case-by-case basis, taking into account available resources and their priority. ORD will strive to make maximal use of

opportunities where ongoing ORD activities easily match with a regional priority. When evaluating resources, ORD will consider its ongoing commitments as well as the resources devoted to other activities within the region. For those Regional priorities that ORD can support, ORD would develop a response indicating which NPD is responsible for the activity and when a deliverable (e.g., a progress report) is anticipated. The response will also indicate the level of Regional involvement required to adequately address their need, participation on workgroups or planning meetings to represent the regional viewpoint.

Once ORD generates a progress report, the Regions will report back to ORD whether the progress reported has sufficiently addressed their need. If it has, the Regions will be asked to elaborate on how ORD's assistance has "made a difference". If not, the Regions and ORD may elect to continue to emphasis this need as one of their priorities, with the understanding that further work may require an influx of additional resources, or resources may need to be redirected from another Regional priority that ORD is working on.

Finally, the Regional priorities communicated to ORD will result in a "dataset" of Regional needs that can mined by the Regions, the National Program Offices, and by ORD to identify cross-regional themes as well as potential areas for partnership and collaboration. A summary of regional priorities could be compiled and shared with ORD senior managers (NPDs, ALDs, etc) and with key contacts within the National Program Offices.

Improved Documentation of ORD Support

ORD's assistance with Regional needs identified using the above process(es) will be included in a documented listing of ORD support to the Regions. However, there may be many examples of ORD support that are obtained through "informal" communication of Regional needs. Because these lists will help ORD better document its support to the Agency's mission, we expect that for these "informal" solicitations, are of value to ORD, it is expected that, for these "informal" solicitations, the Regions which are the recipients of this support will endeavor to document these activities with a level of detail similar to that obtained through the above-described process(es). We proposed that the Regional Science Liaisons be responsible for developing and maintaining these lists.

ORD Requests for Regional Support

Finally, because ORD would benefit from Regional input on research planning teams, workgroups, or review efforts, ORD will identify, also on a regular (e.g., annual) basis, their Regional assistance needs. Some examples of Regional assistance may include:

- o Participating on Research Coordination Teams
- o Participating on ORD-led workgroups for a specific topic
- o Participating on BOSC reviews
- o Participating on STAR reviews

NPDs will rely on the Lead Region Coordinators and RSLs to assist them in determining how best to fulfill these ORD requests for Regional assistance.

Attachment A

<u>Consultative Advice</u>

Some examples include:
- phone consultation
- advice on using an ORD-developed tool or methodology

Note: this type of support occurs frequently and typically goes undocumented.

<u>Workgroup/Committee/Conference Participation</u>

Some examples include:

- participation in a meeting led by a region to present research results
- serving on a workgroup to provide advice on a regional activity

<u>Document Review</u>

Some examples include:

- reviewing documents or models that support a regional decision, such as the risk assessments and model used by the Navy to support a permit decision to allow them to sink the ex-Oriskany to create an artificial reef

<u>Technical Outreach</u>

Some examples include:

- site specific use of, or training on, an existing ORD-developed tool/methodology
- ORD participation in Regional efforts utilizing ORD tools/methodologies
- On-site ORD-led workshops or training (on ORD tools/methodology) to State and Regional staff

<u>Research</u>

National Coastal Assessment*; FY2000-present; SESD (Pete Kalla et al) and Gulf Breeze (Jim Harvey);

The purpose of this project is to provide a statistically valid, synoptic assessment of in-shore and near-shore waters of the southeastern U.S. as part of a unified survey of the Nation's coasts.

Headwaters Delineation and Assessment*; FY2006 to present; SESD (Pete Kalla et al), Cincinnati (Ken Fritz, Brent Johnson, and David Walters), and Corvallis (Rich Sumner);

The purpose of this project is to define and evaluate headwaters for regulatory purposes in selected ecoregions, as a pilot for nationwide efforts to protect that resource.

Gulf Coast Wetlands Assessment Pilot Project*; FY2006 to present; SESD (Pete Kalla et al) and Corvallis (Rich Sumner, Tony Olsen, and Mary Kentula) and Gulf Breeze (John McCauley and Virginia Engle);

The purpose of this project is to demonstrate the EMAP approach for wetland assessment on the wetlands of the Gulf of Mexico.

Correlation of Air Toxics Exposure Information with Ecosystem and Human Health Vulnerability Factors: FY2006 to present: APTMD (LaToya Miller) and RTP (Betsy Smith) (REVA project);

The purpose of this project is to identify Region 4's important ecological areas and human health populations that are most vulnerable to air toxics.

* ORD-initiated studies

Attachment B

Suggested format for each priority need:
- Type of Support Needed (Research, Non-Research, Technology)
- The priority of the need (i.e., high+, high, medium)
- Background (one paragraph "problem statement" that provides the context for the science need)
- Science Support Need (one paragraph summary of the science support need)
- Desired Next Steps (optional – when a support need is broad, Regions should suggest specific next steps for support)
- Existing Partners (identify whether the Region has already established a partnership to help address the support need either ORD, another EPA office, a state or other partner)
- Desired Output/Product
- A description of how the output will be used in regional decision-making
- Regional Contact